THERE'S A NEW WEB-SLINGER IN TOWN!
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
#1
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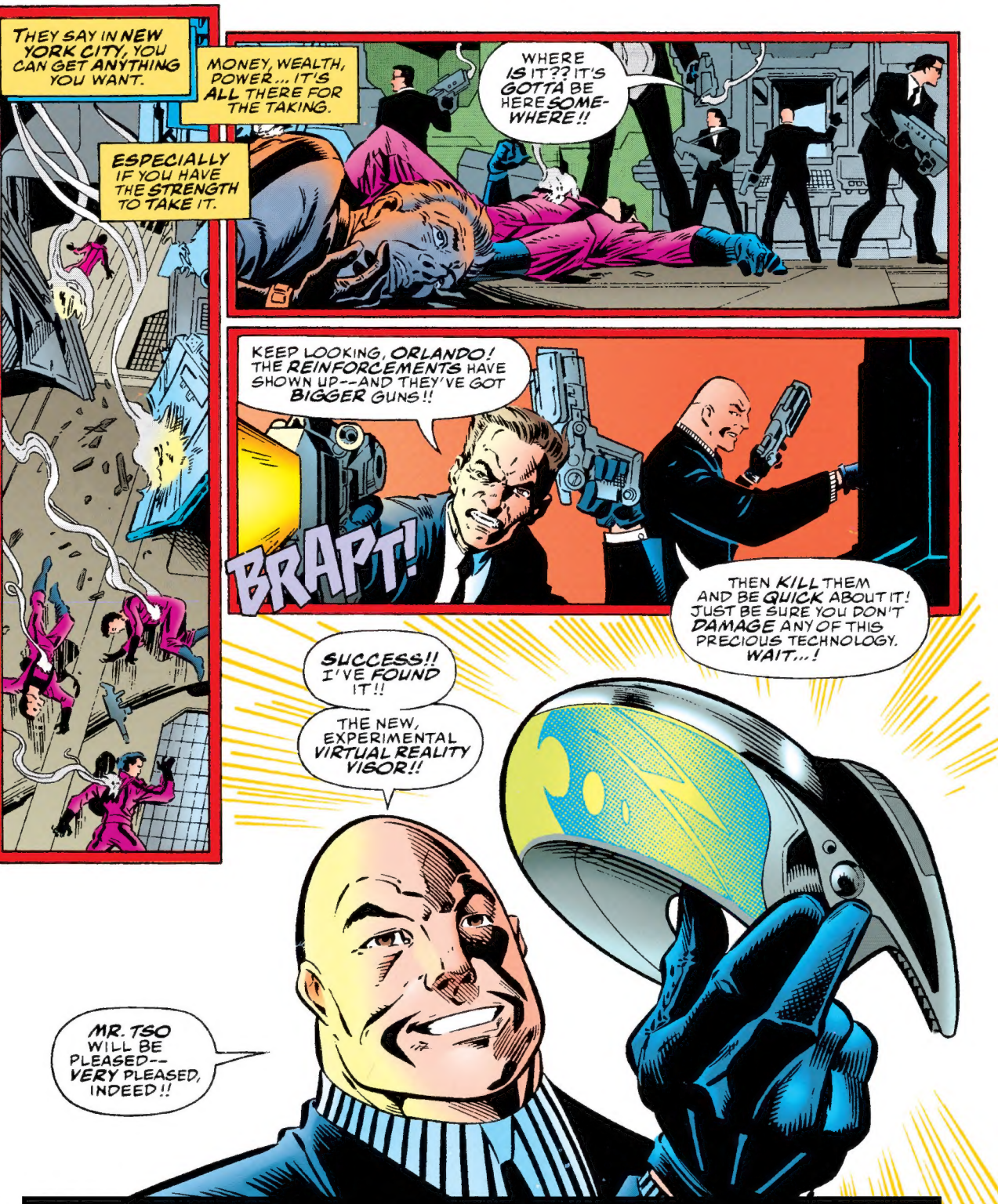
MARVEL
SPIDER-MAN GROUP
THE AMAZING SCARLET SPIDER
VIRTUAL MORTALITY
PART 2 OF 4

ONCE HE WAS **PETER PARKER,** A STUDENT WHO, AFTER BEING BITTEN BY A RADIOACTIVE SPIDER, BECAME THE **AMAZING SPIDER-MAN!** NOW, AFTER FIVE YEARS OF WANDERING AMERICA, BELIEVING HIMSELF TO BE A CLONE OF PARKER, HE HAS RETURNED AS **BEN REILLY**, AND IS READY TO RESUME HIS CRUSADE TO PROTECT THE INNOCENT AND BATTLE EVIL, IN A NEW COSTUMED IDENTITY...**STAN LEE PRESENTS: THE SCARLET SPIDER!**



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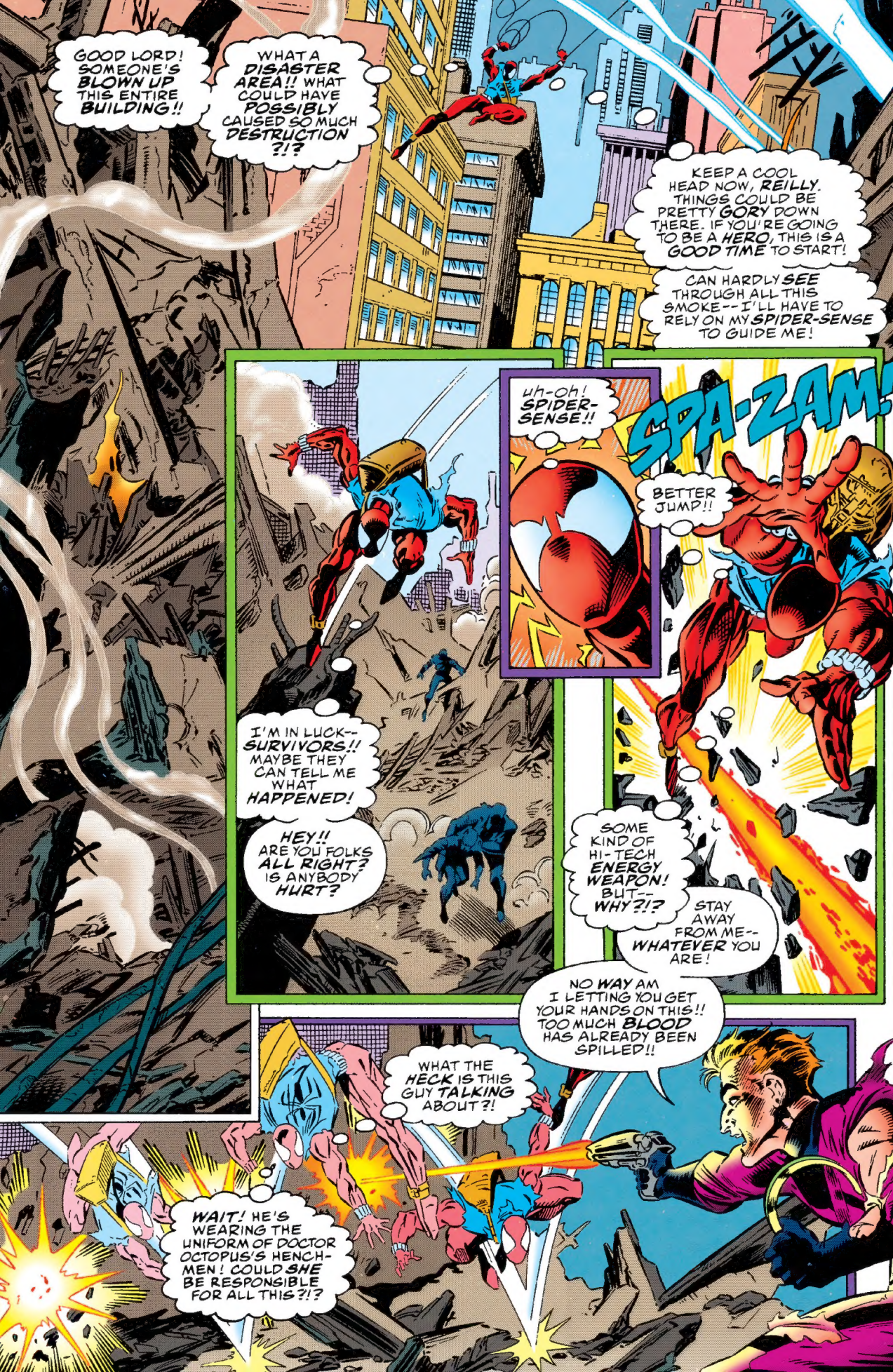
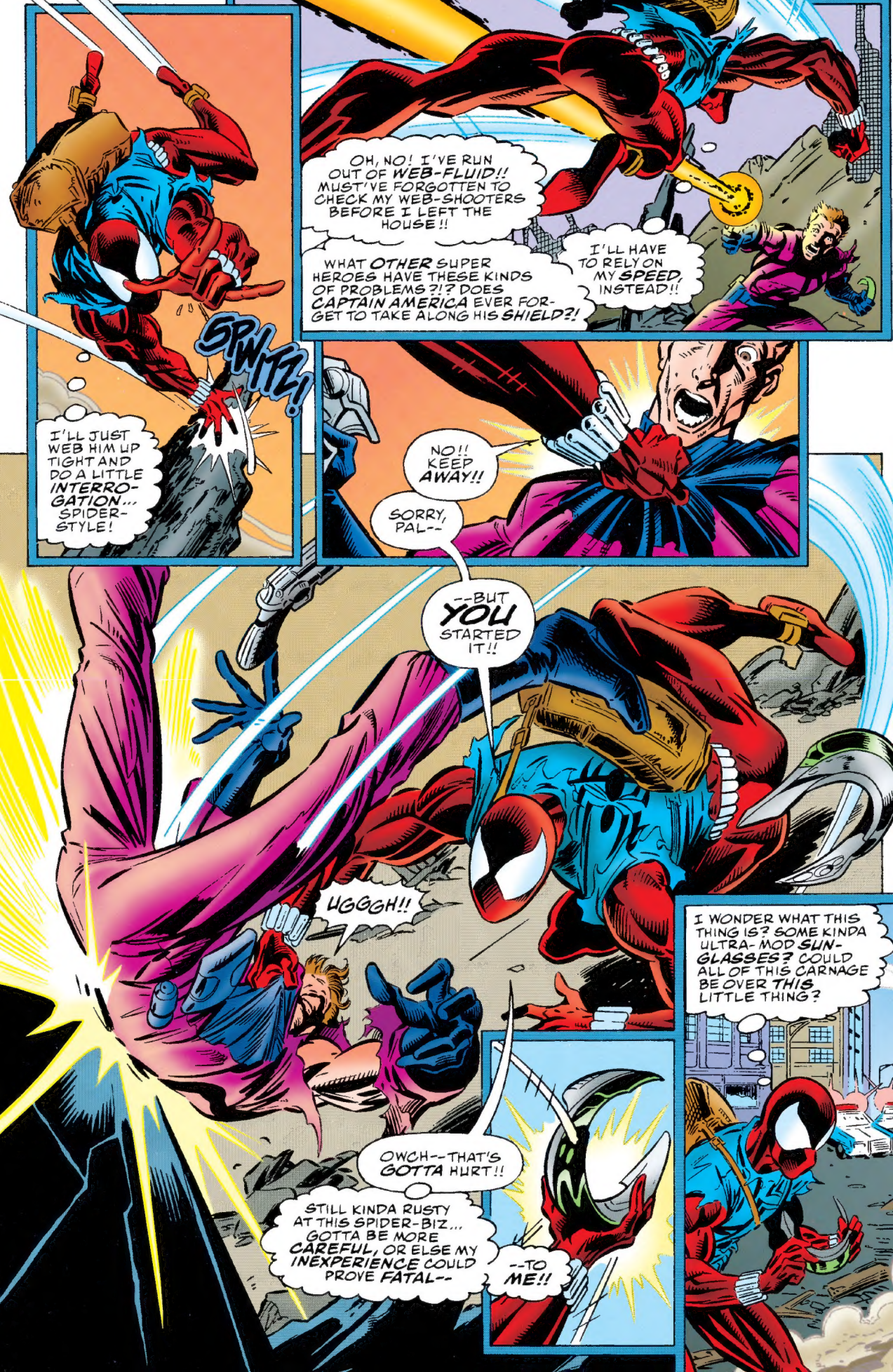
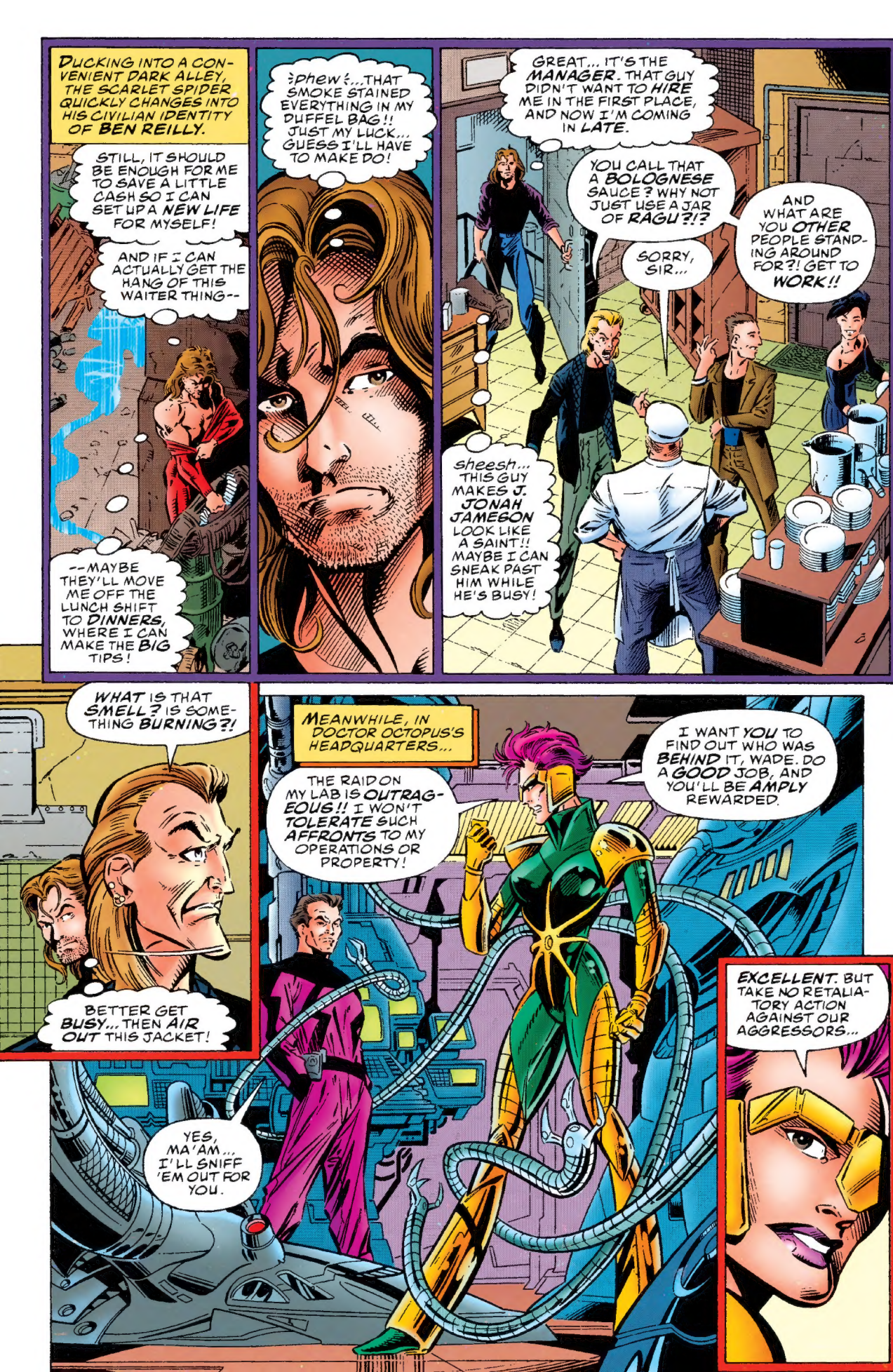
TEAM LEADER, REPORTING TO DOCTOR OCTOPUS FROM SATELLITE BASE GAMMA! WE NEED BACK-UP!!
THE INFILTRATORS HAVE GOT US PINNED DOWN! THEY'RE KILLING US!!
ARRGHH!
F-ZAM!
THAT IS NOT MY PRIMARY CONCERN, TEAM LEADER. MY WONDERFUL EQUIPMENT MUSTN'T FALL INTO THE HANDS OF MY COMPETITORS.
YOUR ATTACKERS ...ARE THEY PRESENT WITHIN THE LABORATORY ?
AFFIRMATIVE, DOCTOR!! REQUEST PERMISSION TO ABANDON THIS BASE-- IMMEDIATELY!!
NEGATIVE, TEAM LEADER. I PROTECT THAT WHICH IS MINE--
--AND I NEVER RUN FROM A FIGHT.
M-5 DESTRUCT
KLIK!

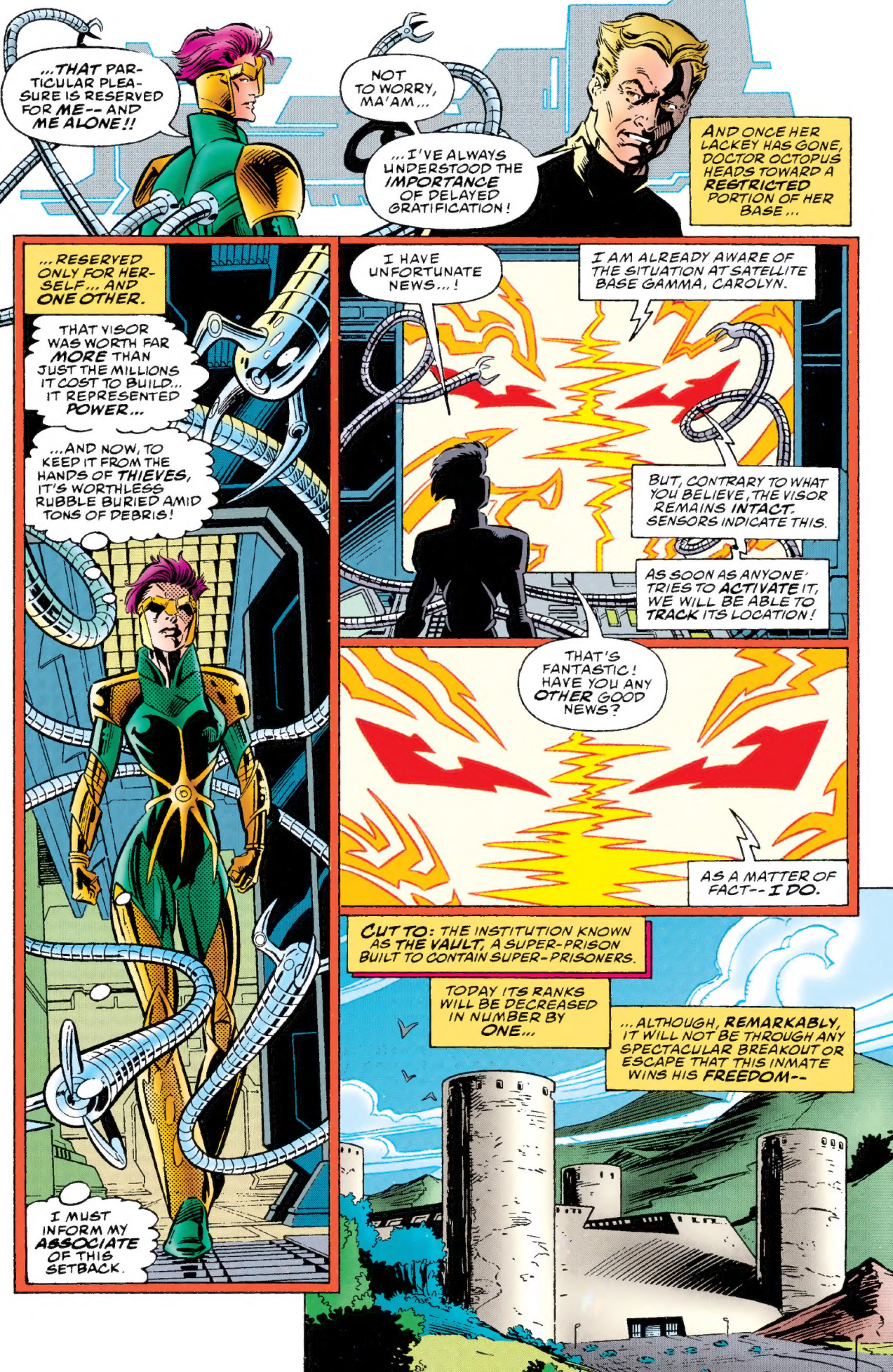
STAN LEE PRESENTS:
VIOLATED BY THE VIRTUAL
VIRTUAL MORTALITY ○ PART 2
TOM DeFALCO ○ plot MIKE LACKEY ○ script
MARK BAGLEY ○ pencils LARRY MAHLSTEDT ○ inks
BOB SHAREN ○ colors MALIBU COMPUTER COLOR ○ seps
BILL OAKLEY ○ letters BOB BUDIANSKY ○ editor in chief
IT'S STILL HARD TO BELIEVE THAT I'M REALLY THE CITY'S ONLY RESIDENT WEB-SWINGER.
TALK ABOUT A DREAM COME TRUE...! FOR FIVE LONG YEARS I'VE WAITED FOR THIS MOMENT TO COME-- BUT AM I READY FOR IT?!?
LET'S SEE... WORD HAS IT DOWN ON THE STREET THAT THE NEW DOCTOR OCTOPUS HAS A HIDEOUT SOMEWHERE IN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD.
I WONDER WHERE IT COULD BE?
KA-BWAM!

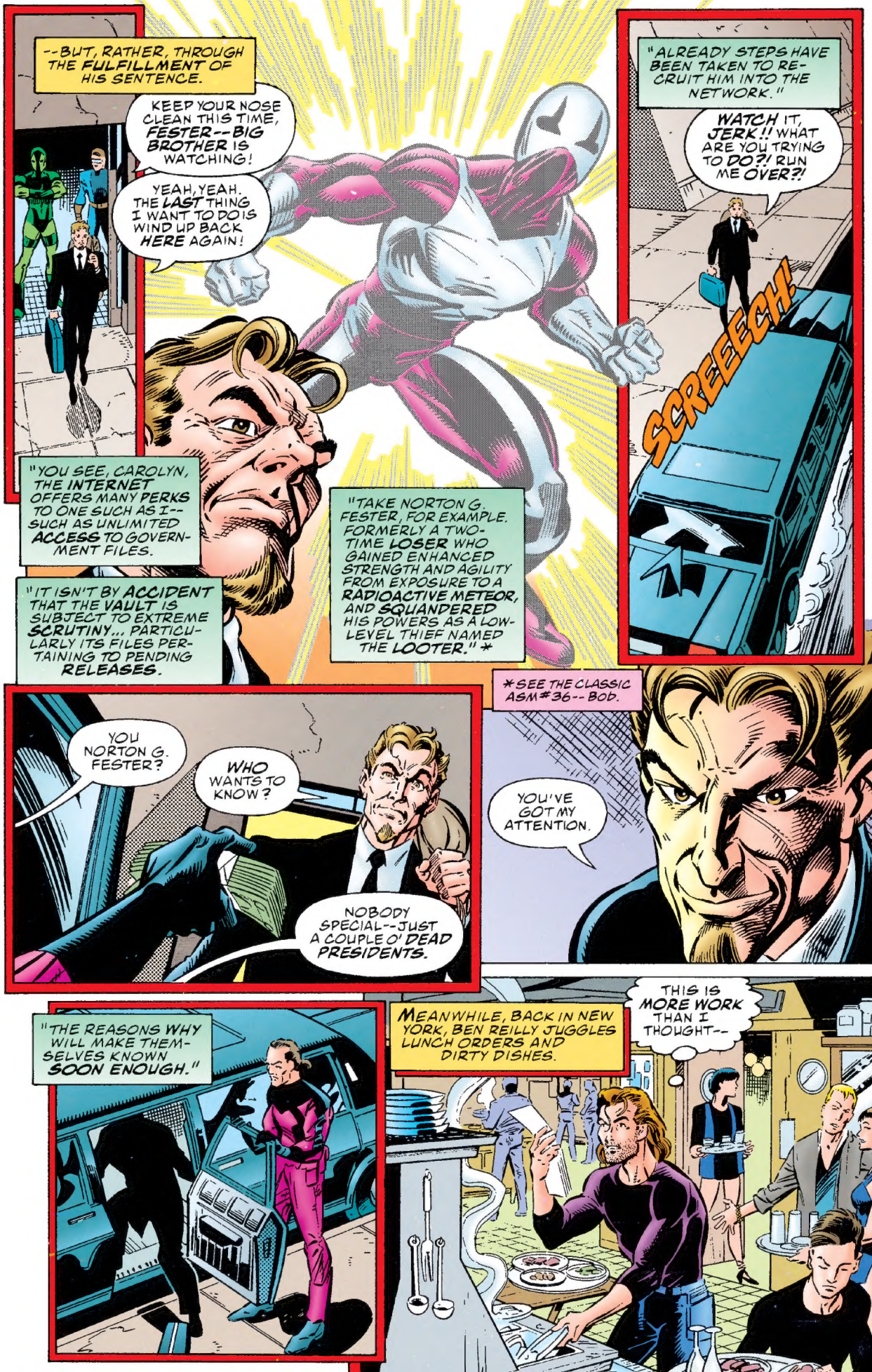

GOOD LORD! SOMEONE'S BLOWN UP THIS ENTIRE BUILDING!!
WHAT A DISASTER AREA!! WHAT COULD HAVE POSSIBLY CAUSED SO MUCH DESTRUCTION ?!?
KEEP A COOL HEAD NOW, REILLY. THINGS COULD BE PRETTY GORY DOWN THERE. IF YOU'RE GOING TO BE A HERO, THIS IS A GOOD TIME TO START!
CAN HARDLY SEE THROUGH ALL THIS SMOKE--I'LL HAVE TO RELY ON MY SPIDER-SENSE TO GUIDE ME!
I'M IN LUCK--SURVIVORS!! MAYBE THEY CAN TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED!
HEY!! ARE YOU FOLKS ALL RIGHT? IS ANYBODY HURT?
uh-oh! SPIDER-SENSE!!
SPA-ZAM!
BETTER JUMP!!
SOME KIND OF HI-TECH ENERGY WEAPON! BUT--WHY?!?
STAY AWAY FROM ME--WHATEVER YOU ARE!
NO WAY AM I LETTING YOU GET YOUR HANDS ON THIS!! TOO MUCH BLOOD HAS ALREADY BEEN SPILLED!!
WHAT THE HECK IS THIS GUY TALKING ABOUT?!
WAIT! HE'S WEARING THE UNIFORM OF DOCTOR OCTOPUS'S HENCHMEN! COULD SHE BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THIS?!?

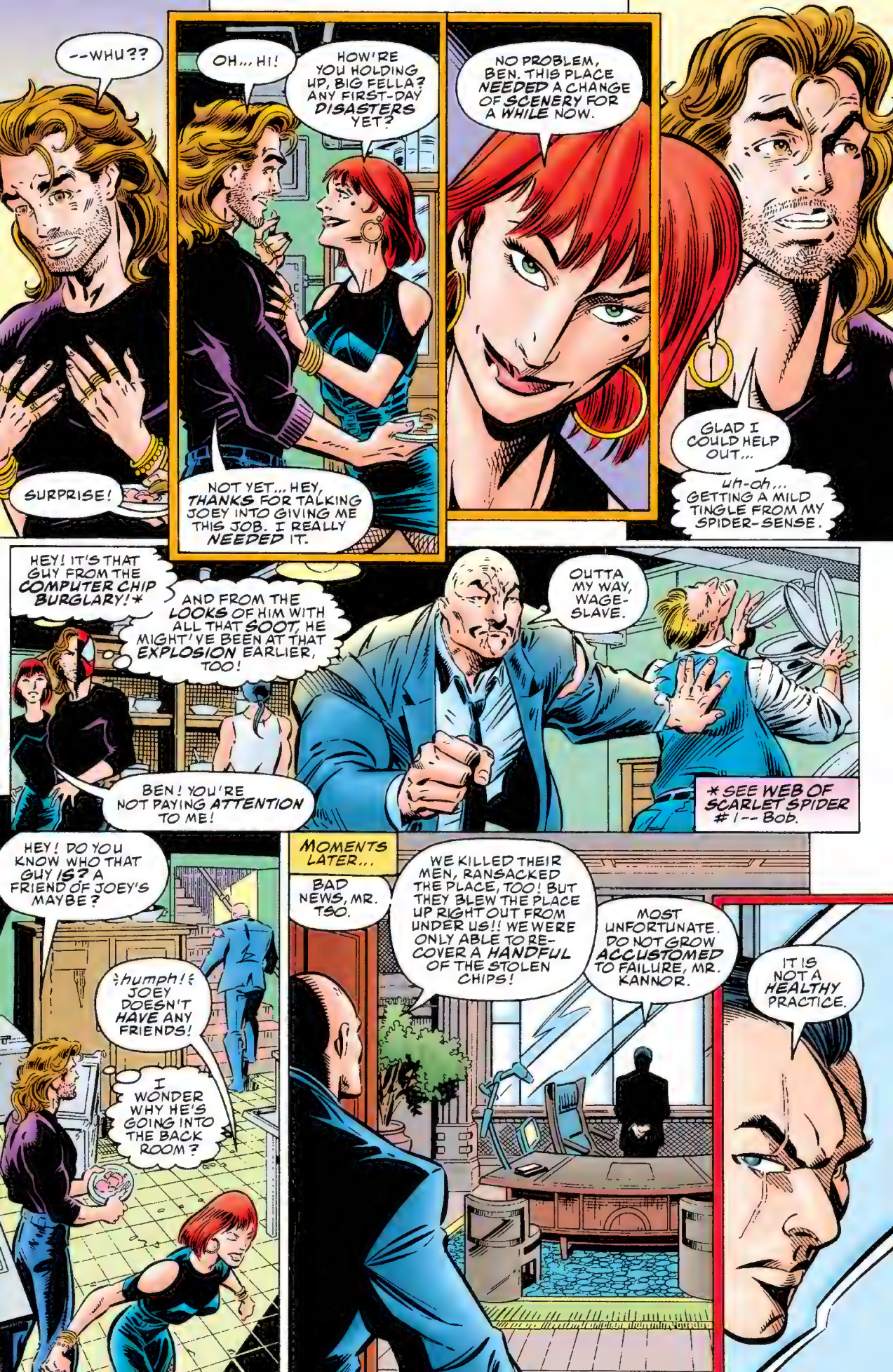

OH, NO! I'VE RUN OUT OF WEB-FLUID!! MUST'VE FORGOTTEN TO CHECK MY WEB-SHOOTERS BEFORE I LEFT THE HOUSE!!
WHAT OTHER SUPER HEROES HAVE THESE KINDS OF PROBLEMS?!? DOES CAPTAIN AMERICA EVER FORGET TO TAKE ALONG HIS SHIELD?!
I'LL HAVE TO RELY ON MY SPEED, INSTEAD!!
SPWITZ!
I'LL JUST WEB HIM UP TIGHT AND DO A LITTLE INTERROGATION... SPIDER-STYLE!
NO!! KEEP AWAY!!
SORRY, PAL--
--BUT YOU STARTED IT!!
UGGGH!!
OWCH--THAT'S GOTTA HURT!!
STILL KINDA RUSTY AT THIS SPIDER-BIZ... GOTTA BE MORE CAREFUL, OR ELSE MY INEXPERIENCE COULD PROVE FATAL--
--TO ME!!
I WONDER WHAT THIS THING IS? SOME KINDA ULTRA-MOD SUN-GLASSES? COULD ALL OF THIS CARNAGE BE OVER THIS LITTLE THING?

HOLD IT, HERO!!
uh-oh...
SORRY, OFFICER...
...BUT I JUST REMEMBERED--I LEFT THE WATER RUNNING IN THE TUB BACK HOME!
GOTTA SCOOT!
BUT ANY FURTHER DETECTIVE WORK WILL HAVE TO WAIT--
--UNTIL AFTER I FINISH MY SHIFT AT THE CLUB!
HATE TO BEAT AND RUN, BUT I CAN'T ALLOW MYSELF TO BE QUESTIONED BY THE COPS! BESIDES, THEY'D PROBABLY TAKE THIS VISOR!
I MIGHT BE IMAGINING THINGS, BUT I'D SWEAR IT RESEMBLES THE VR HELMET THAT MY PAL, SEWARD TRAINER, DESIGNED!*
*SEE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #406--Bob.
MR. TSO WILL NOT BE PLEASED. THIS OPERATION HAS COST US FAR TOO MUCH--AND WE ONLY MANAGED TO ACHIEVE PART OF OUR OBJECTIVES.
YOU THINK IT'S SUFFICIENT, ORLANDO?
WE'LL FIND OUT SOON ENOUGH...
...WHEN WE SEE MR. TSO.
MOMENTS LATER, AT THE TRENDY NEW CLUB NOIR...
NOIR
I GUESS BEING A WAITER FOR THE CHIC AND ELITE ISN'T THE WORST JOB A GUY COULD HAVE...
...BUT IT'S DEFINITELY NOT GOING TO BE MY LIFE'S WORK!


DUCKING INTO A CONVENIENT DARK ALLEY, THE SCARLET SPIDER QUICKLY CHANGES INTO HIS CIVILIAN IDENTITY OF BEN REILLY.
STILL, IT SHOULD BE ENOUGH FOR ME TO SAVE A LITTLE CASH SO I CAN SET UP A NEW LIFE FOR MYSELF!
AND IF I CAN ACTUALLY GET THE HANG OF THIS WAITER THING--
--MAYBE THEY'LL MOVE ME OFF THE LUNCH SHIFT TO DINNERS, WHERE I CAN MAKE THE BIG TIPS!
:phew:...THAT SMOKE STAINED EVERYTHING IN MY DUFFEL BAG!! JUST MY LUCK... GUESS I'LL HAVE TO MAKE DO!
GREAT... IT'S THE MANAGER. THAT GUY DIDN'T WANT TO HIRE ME IN THE FIRST PLACE, AND NOW I'M COMING IN LATE.
YOU CALL THAT A BOLOGNESE SAUCE? WHY NOT JUST USE A JAR OF RAGU?!?
SORRY, SIR...
AND WHAT ARE YOU OTHER PEOPLE STANDING AROUND FOR?! GET TO WORK!!
sheesh... THIS GUY MAKES J. JONAH JAMESON LOOK LIKE A SAINT!! MAYBE I CAN SNEAK PAST HIM WHILE HE'S BUSY!
WHAT IS THAT SMELL? IS SOMETHING BURNING?!
BETTER GET BUSY... THEN AIR OUT THIS JACKET!
MEANWHILE, IN DOCTOR OCTOPUS'S HEADQUARTERS...
THE RAID ON MY LAB IS OUTRAGEOUS!! I WON'T TOLERATE SUCH AFFRONTS TO MY OPERATIONS OR PROPERTY!
I WANT YOU TO FIND OUT WHO WAS BEHIND IT, WADE. DO A GOOD JOB, AND YOU'LL BE AMPLY REWARDED.
YES, MA'AM... I'LL SNIFF 'EM OUT FOR YOU.
EXCELLENT. BUT TAKE NO RETALIATORY ACTION AGAINST OUR AGGRESSORS...

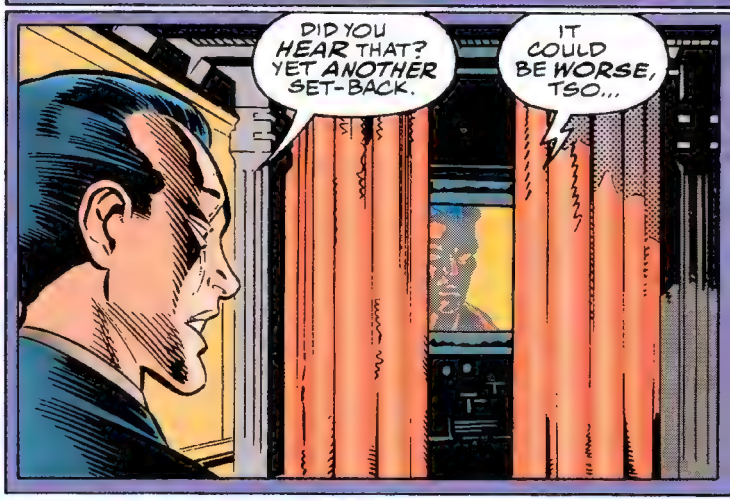

...THAT PARTICULAR PLEASURE IS RESERVED FOR ME-- AND ME ALONE!!
NOT TO WORRY, MA'AM...
...I'VE ALWAYS UNDERSTOOD THE IMPORTANCE OF DELAYED GRATIFICATION!
AND ONCE HER LACKEY HAS GONE, DOCTOR OCTOPUS HEADS TOWARD A RESTRICTED PORTION OF HER BASE...
...RESERVED ONLY FOR HERSELF... AND ONE OTHER.
THAT VISOR WAS WORTH FAR MORE THAN JUST THE MILLIONS IT COST TO BUILD... IT REPRESENTED POWER...
...AND NOW, TO KEEP IT FROM THE HANDS OF THIEVES, IT'S WORTHLESS RUBBLE BURIED AMID TONS OF DEBRIS!
I MUST INFORM MY ASSOCIATE OF THIS SETBACK.
I HAVE UNFORTUNATE NEWS...!
I AM ALREADY AWARE OF THE SITUATION AT SATELLITE BASE GAMMA, CAROLYN.
BUT, CONTRARY TO WHAT YOU BELIEVE, THE VISOR REMAINS INTACT. SENSORS INDICATE THIS.
AS SOON AS ANYONE TRIES TO ACTIVATE IT, WE WILL BE ABLE TO TRACK ITS LOCATION!
THAT'S FANTASTIC! HAVE YOU ANY OTHER GOOD NEWS?
AS A MATTER OF FACT-- I DO.
CUT TO: THE INSTITUTION KNOWN AS THE VAULT, A SUPER-PRISON BUILT TO CONTAIN SUPER-PRISONERS.
TODAY ITS RANKS WILL BE DECREASED IN NUMBER BY ONE...
...ALTHOUGH, REMARKABLY, IT WILL NOT BE THROUGH ANY SPECTACULAR BREAKOUT OR ESCAPE THAT THIS INMATE WINS HIS FREEDOM--


--BUT, RATHER, THROUGH THE FULFILLMENT OF HIS SENTENCE.
KEEP YOUR NOSE CLEAN THIS TIME, FESTER--BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING!
YEAH, YEAH. THE LAST THING I WANT TO DO IS WIND UP BACK HERE AGAIN!
"YOU SEE, CAROLYN, THE INTERNET OFFERS MANY PERKS TO ONE SUCH AS I--SUCH AS UNLIMITED ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT FILES.
"IT ISN'T BY ACCIDENT THAT THE VAULT IS SUBJECT TO EXTREME SCRUTINY... PARTICULARLY ITS FILES PERTAINING TO PENDING RELEASES.
"TAKE NORTON G. FESTER, FOR EXAMPLE. FORMERLY A TWO-TIME LOSER WHO GAINED ENHANCED STRENGTH AND AGILITY FROM EXPOSURE TO A RADIOACTIVE METEOR, AND SQUANDERED HIS POWERS AS A LOW-LEVEL THIEF NAMED THE LOOTER." *
"ALREADY STEPS HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO RECRUIT HIM INTO THE NETWORK."
WATCH IT, JERK!! WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO DO?! RUN ME OVER?!
SCREEECH!
YOU NORTON G. FESTER?
WHO WANTS TO KNOW?
NOBODY SPECIAL--JUST A COUPLE O' DEAD PRESIDENTS.
*SEE THE CLASSIC ASM #36--Bob.
YOU'VE GOT MY ATTENTION.
"THE REASONS WHY WILL MAKE THEMSELVES KNOWN SOON ENOUGH."
MEANWHILE, BACK IN NEW YORK, BEN REILLY JUGGLES LUNCH ORDERS AND DIRTY DISHES.
THIS IS MORE WORK THAN I THOUGHT--


--WHU??
SURPRISE!
OH... HI!
HOW'RE YOU HOLDING UP, BIG FELLA? ANY FIRST-DAY DISASTERS YET?
NOT YET... HEY, THANKS FOR TALKING JOEY INTO GIVING ME THIS JOB. I REALLY NEEDED IT.
NO PROBLEM, BEN. THIS PLACE NEEDED A CHANGE OF SCENERY FOR A WHILE NOW.
GLAD I COULD HELP OUT...
uh-oh... GETTING A MILD TINGLE FROM MY SPIDER-SENSE.
HEY! IT'S THAT GUY FROM THE COMPUTER CHIP BURGLARY!*
AND FROM THE LOOKS OF HIM WITH ALL THAT SOOT, HE MIGHT'VE BEEN AT THAT EXPLOSION EARLIER, TOO!
BEN! YOU'RE NOT PAYING ATTENTION TO ME!
OUTTA MY WAY, WAGE-SLAVE.
* SEE WEB OF SCARLET SPIDER #1 -- Bob.
HEY! DO YOU KNOW WHO THAT GUY IS? A FRIEND OF JOEY'S MAYBE?
humph! JOEY DOESN'T HAVE ANY FRIENDS!
I WONDER WHY HE'S GOING INTO THE BACK ROOM?
MOMENTS LATER...
BAD NEWS, MR. TSO.
WE KILLED THEIR MEN, RANSACKED THE PLACE, TOO! BUT THEY BLEW THE PLACE UP RIGHT OUT FROM UNDER US!! WE WERE ONLY ABLE TO RE-COVER A HANDFUL OF THE STOLEN CHIPS!
MOST UNFORTUNATE. DO NOT GROW ACCUSTOMED TO FAILURE, MR. KANNOR.
IT IS NOT A HEALTHY PRACTICE.

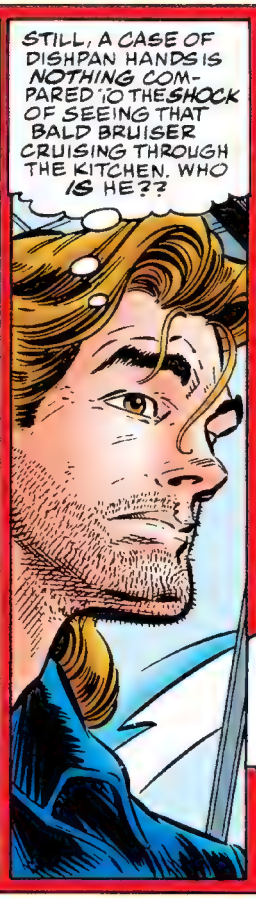
I ASSURE YOU, SIR... THE NEXT TIME WE CLASH WITH THE OCTOPUS GANG, WE'LL--
DO NOT MAKE PROMISES YOU CANNOT KEEP. YOU SHOULD CONSIDER YOUR POSITION WITH THIS ORGANIZATION TENUOUS AT BEST.
I ADVISE A RENEWED EFFORT ON YOUR PART.

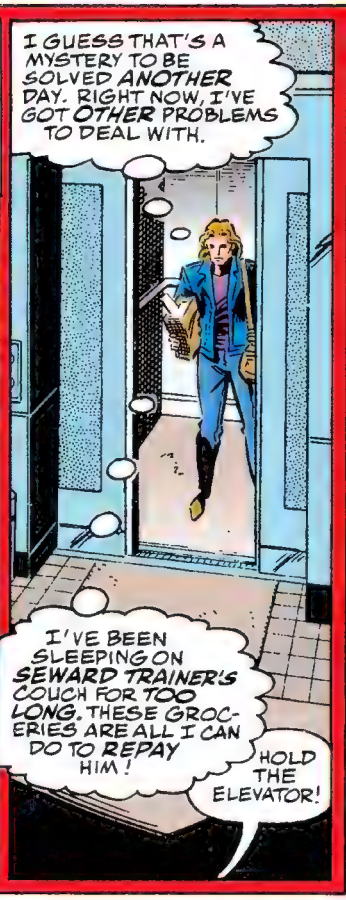
LEAVE THE CHIPS ON MY DESK. YOU ARE EXCUSED.
YES, SIR... THANK YOU, SIR.

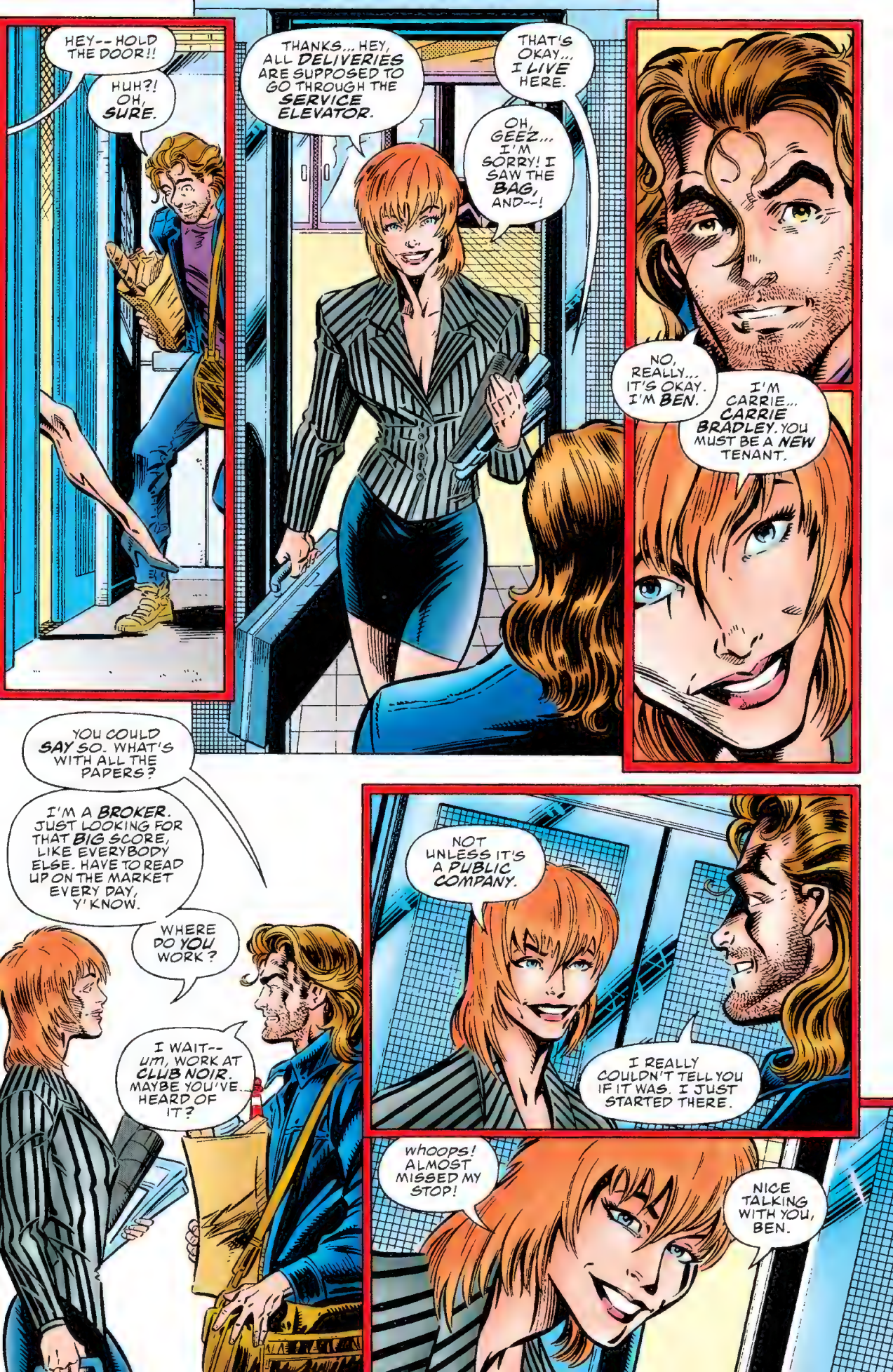

DID YOU HEAR THAT? YET ANOTHER SET-BACK.
IT COULD BE WORSE, TSO...

...THE DESTRUCTION OF THE OCTOPUS LAB BURDENS OUR RIVALS WITH DIFFICULTIES OF THEIR OWN. PROVIDED THEY DO NOT DISCOVER THAT IT WAS WE WHO WERE BEHIND THE RAID--
--THE DAY MAY YET BE OURS!
AND THOSE MICROCHIPS WILL BE PUT TO GOOD USE...

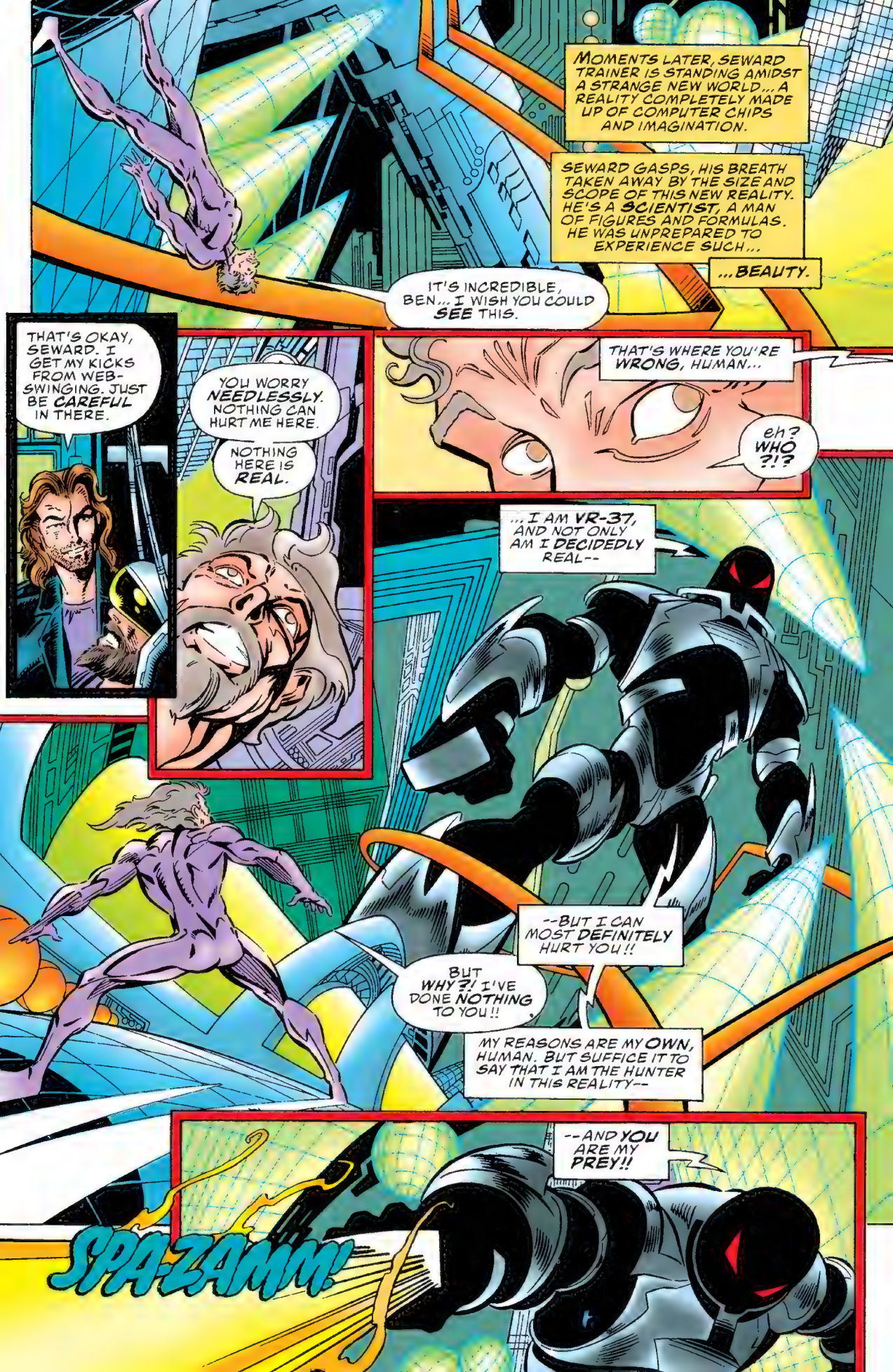
AND ON THAT OMINOUS NOTE, LET'S TURN BACK TO BEN REILLY, NOW LOADED DOWN WITH GROCERIES AFTER A PARTICULARLY HARD SHIFT...
IF I NEVER SEE ANOTHER BRILLO PAD, IT'LL BE TOO SOON.


STILL, A CASE OF DISHPAN HANDS IS NOTHING COMPARED TO THE SHOCK OF SEEING THAT BALD BRUISER CRUISING THROUGH THE KITCHEN. WHO IS HE??


I GUESS THAT'S A MYSTERY TO BE SOLVED ANOTHER DAY. RIGHT NOW, I'VE GOT OTHER PROBLEMS TO DEAL WITH.
I'VE BEEN SLEEPING ON SEWARD TRAINER'S COUCH FOR TOO LONG. THESE GROCERIES ARE ALL I CAN DO TO REPAY HIM!
HOLD THE ELEVATOR!


HEY-- HOLD THE DOOR!!
HUH?! OH, SURE.
THANKS... HEY, ALL DELIVERIES ARE SUPPOSED TO GO THROUGH THE SERVICE ELEVATOR.
THAT'S OKAY... I LIVE HERE.
OH, GEEZ... I'M SORRY! I SAW THE BAG, AND--!
NO, REALLY... IT'S OKAY. I'M BEN.
I'M CARRIE... CARRIE BRADLEY. YOU MUST BE A NEW TENANT.
YOU COULD SAY SO. WHAT'S WITH ALL THE PAPERS?
I'M A BROKER. JUST LOOKING FOR THAT BIG SCORE, LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE. HAVE TO READ UP ON THE MARKET EVERY DAY, Y'KNOW.
WHERE DO YOU WORK?
I WAIT-- um, WORK AT CLUB NOIR. MAYBE YOU'VE HEARD OF IT?
NOT UNLESS IT'S A PUBLIC COMPANY.
I REALLY COULDN'T TELL YOU IF IT WAS. I JUST STARTED THERE.
whoops! ALMOST MISSED MY STOP!
NICE TALKING WITH YOU, BEN.

NICE GIRL... MAYBE I SHOULDN'T BE IN SUCH A HURRY TO MOVE OUT.
NICE GUY... HE SURE DOESN'T LOOK LIKE THE TYPICAL STUFFED SHIRT THAT LIVES IN THIS BUILDING...
...WHICH MAY NOT BE SUCH A BAD THING...
HELLO, SEWARD? ARE YOU HOME?
HI, BEN... WHAT'S UP?
I'VE GOT SOMETHING TO SHOW YOU.
THERE WAS SOME FRACAS DOWNTOWN BETWEEN THE OCTOPUS GANG AND SOME OTHER GUYS... I THINK IT WAS OVER THIS.
BEN! DO YOU KNOW WHAT THAT IS?!
NOT REALLY. I WAS HOPING YOU COULD TELL ME. I MEAN, IT LOOKS LIKE THE VR HELMET YOU DEVISED A WHILE AGO, BUT--
THIS IS A RADICAL ADVANCEMENT ON ANYTHING I'VE EVER SEEN IN VR TECHNOLOGY! COMPARING MY HELMET TO THIS IS LIKE COMPARING A TRICYCLE TO A HARLEY DAVIDSON.
WHOEVER BUILT THIS WAS GOOD--REAL GOOD.
I CAN'T WAIT TO TEST IT!
I DUNNO, SEWARD. ARE YOU SURE IT'S SAFE? MAYBE I SHOULD--
DON'T BE SILLY, BEN. I HAVE MUCH MORE EXPERIENCE IN VIRTUAL REALITY.
I'LL BE OKAY.
BUT PERHAPS THE AMBITIOUS SCIENTIST HAS SPOKEN TOO SOON...
I SENSE THAT A NEW MIND HAS ENTERED THE NETWORK, CAROLYN.
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
WHY... DEAL WITH IT, OF COURSE.


MOMENTS LATER, SEWARD TRAINER IS STANDING AMIDST A STRANGE NEW WORLD... A REALITY COMPLETELY MADE UP OF COMPUTER CHIPS AND IMAGINATION.
SEWARD GASPS, HIS BREATH TAKEN AWAY BY THE SIZE AND SCOPE OF THIS NEW REALITY. HE'S A SCIENTIST, A MAN OF FIGURES AND FORMULAS. HE WAS UNPREPARED TO EXPERIENCE SUCH...
...BEAUTY.
IT'S INCREDIBLE, BEN... I WISH YOU COULD SEE THIS.
THAT'S OKAY, SEWARD. I GET MY KICKS FROM WEB-SWINGING. JUST BE CAREFUL IN THERE.
YOU WORRY NEEDLESSLY. NOTHING CAN HURT ME HERE.
NOTHING HERE IS REAL.
THAT'S WHERE YOU'RE WRONG, HUMAN...
eh? WHO?!?
...I AM VR-37, AND NOT ONLY AM I DECIDEDLY REAL--
--BUT I CAN MOST DEFINITELY HURT YOU!!
BUT WHY?! I'VE DONE NOTHING TO YOU!!
MY REASONS ARE MY OWN, HUMAN. BUT SUFFICE IT TO SAY THAT I AM THE HUNTER IN THIS REALITY--
--AND YOU ARE MY PREY!!
SPA-ZAMM!

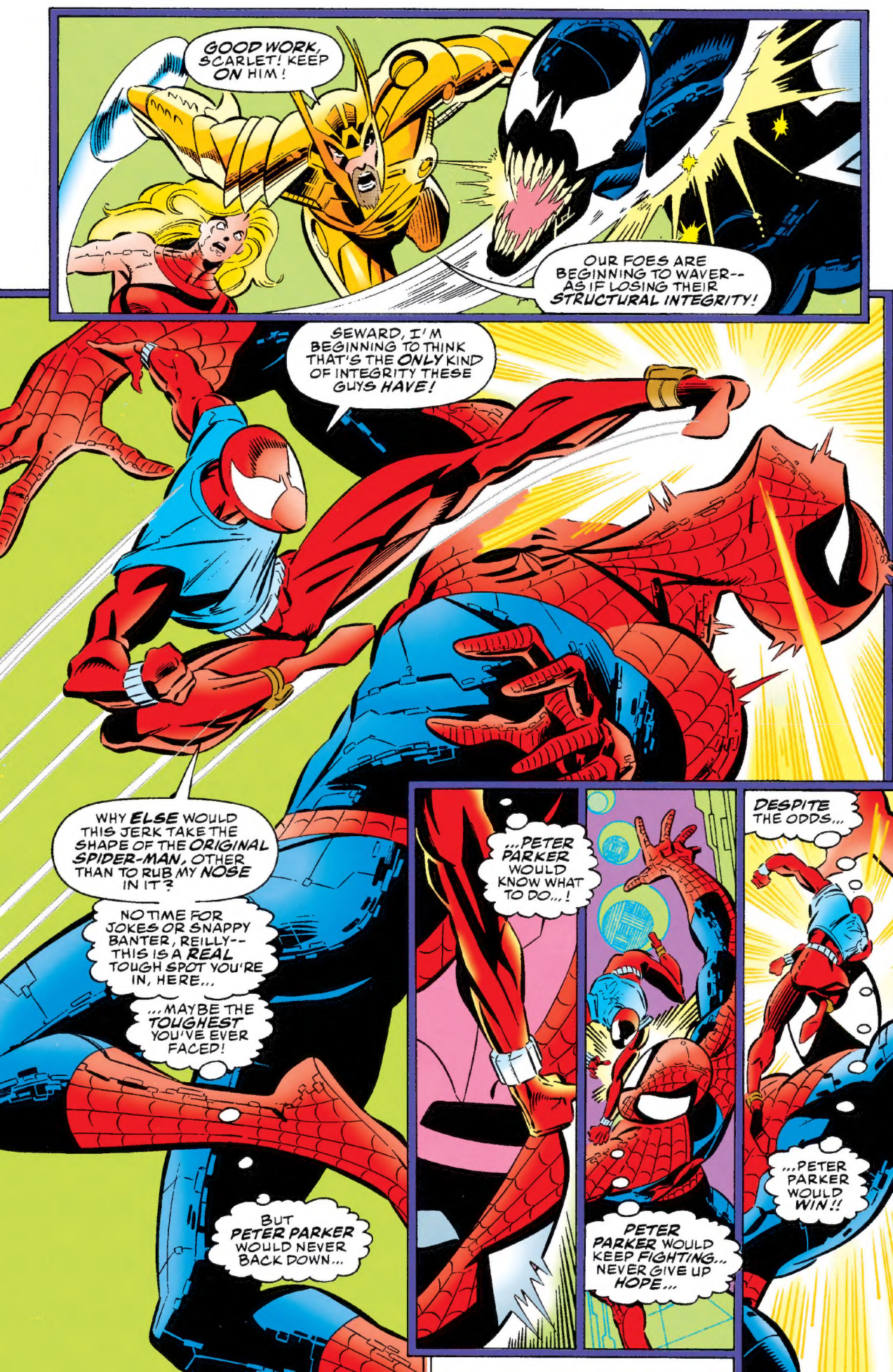
UGGH!
FORTUNATELY, IN THIS VIRTUAL REALITY, I CAN CONCOCT ANY WEAPON MY MIND CAN CONCEIVE OR VISUALIZE--
--BUT, UNFORTUNATELY, SO CAN MY FOE!!
MY SPIDER-SENSE IS GOING OFF THE SCALE!!
SEWARD!! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT IN THERE?!
WHERE'D THAT SHIELD COME FROM?!
SOMETHING'S WRONG!! SOMEHOW, WHATEVER HE'S THINKING OF IN THERE--
--IS MANIFESTING ITSELF IN OUR REALITY!!
WHAT DO I DO?!
PERHAPS SEWARD TRAINER COULD PROVIDE BEN WITH AN ANSWER--
--WERE HE NOT BUSY FIGHTING FOR HIS LIFE!!
HAH!! A PALTRY BLOW, BARELY WORTHY OF BLOCKING! SURELY YOU KNOW YOU ARE DOOMED!
SEWARD DOESN'T ANSWER, DOESN'T ALLOW THE RISING NEED TO SCREAM, TO SHOUT, TO RUN, TO OVERSHADOW WHAT HE MUST DO.
HE KNOWS THAT THIS IS VR-37'S WORLD, THAT THE HOME COURT ADVANTAGE IS HIS...
...AND TO FOCUS ON ANYTHING OTHER THAN SURVIVAL...
...MEANS DEATH!!
ARRRGHH!
I'VE GOT TO HELP HIM... BUT IF I TEAR OFF THE VISOR I RISK INJURING HIS MIND!!

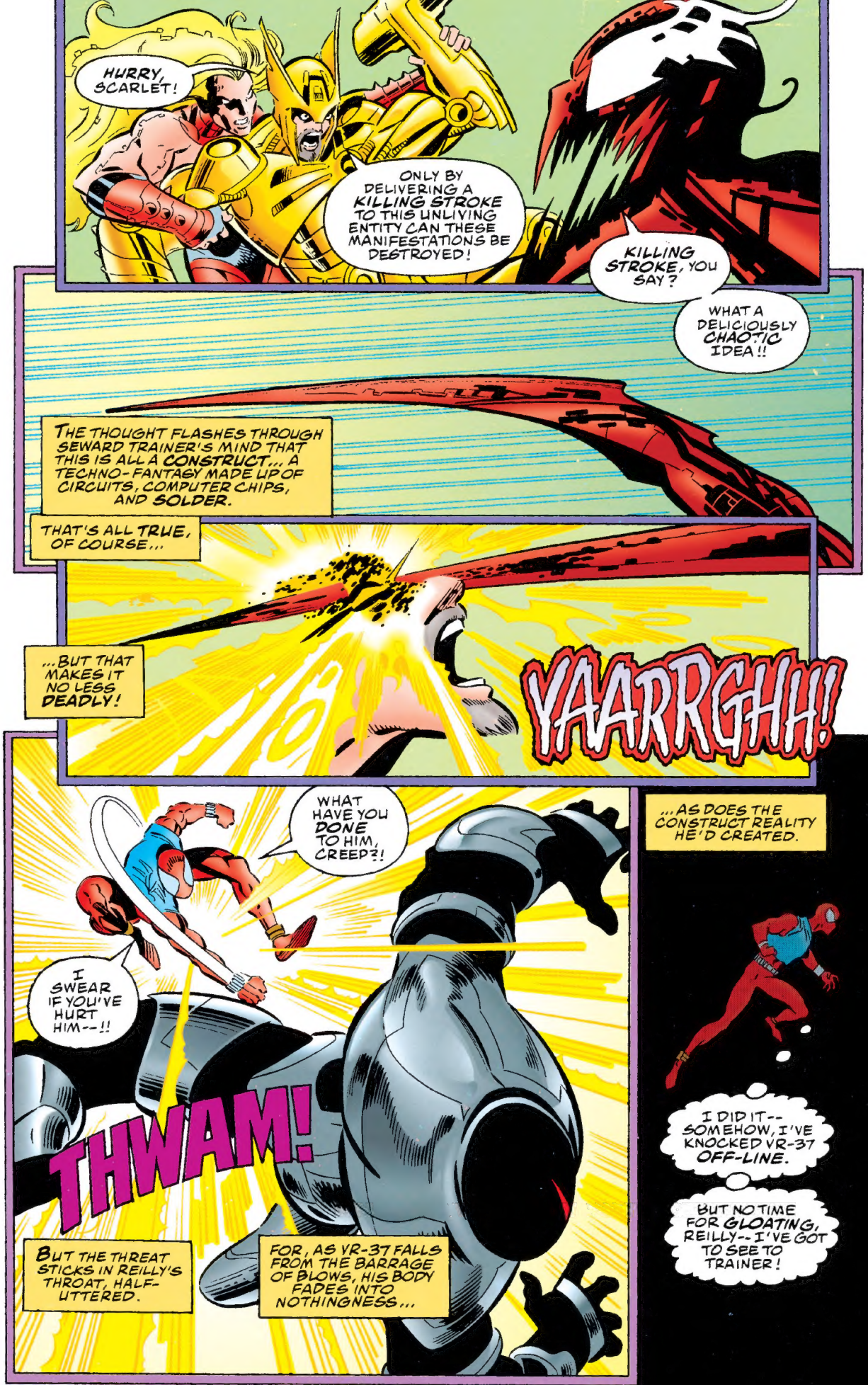
HE'S FIGHTING... STRUGGLING LIKE MAD!
THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT WHAT'S GOING ON--
--I'LL HAVE TO USE SEWARD'S VR HELMET!!
AND, AFTER DONNING THE HIGH-TECH GEAR...
I DON'T BELIEVE IT!! THIS ISN'T LIKE ANYTHING I'VE EVER SEEN BEFORE!!
THE COLORS... THE SOUND... LIKE SOME KIND OF M.C. ESCHER NIGHTMARE!!
AND I'M IN COSTUME! THE VR HELMET MUST BE HIGHLIGHTING MY SUBCONSCIOUS MIND'S NEED TO PROTECT MY SECRET IDENTITY!!
BUT I'D BETTER SAVE THE POSTULATIONS FOR LATER... THAT BIG BRUISER OBVIOUSLY MEANS SEWARD A WORLD OF HURT...
...AND THERE'S NO WAY THAT'S HAPPENING ON MY BEAT!!
PERHAPS THE SCARLET SPIDER, IN HIS INEXPERIENCE, IS A TAD OVERCONFIDENT...
...FOR HE HAS NO WAY OF KNOWING THAT EVEN NOW, VR-37 IS IN CONTACT WITH DOCTOR OCTOPUS HERSELF!
THE SCARLET SPIDER?! WHAT'S HE DOING THERE?!?
DESTROY HIM EXPEDITIOUSLY!!

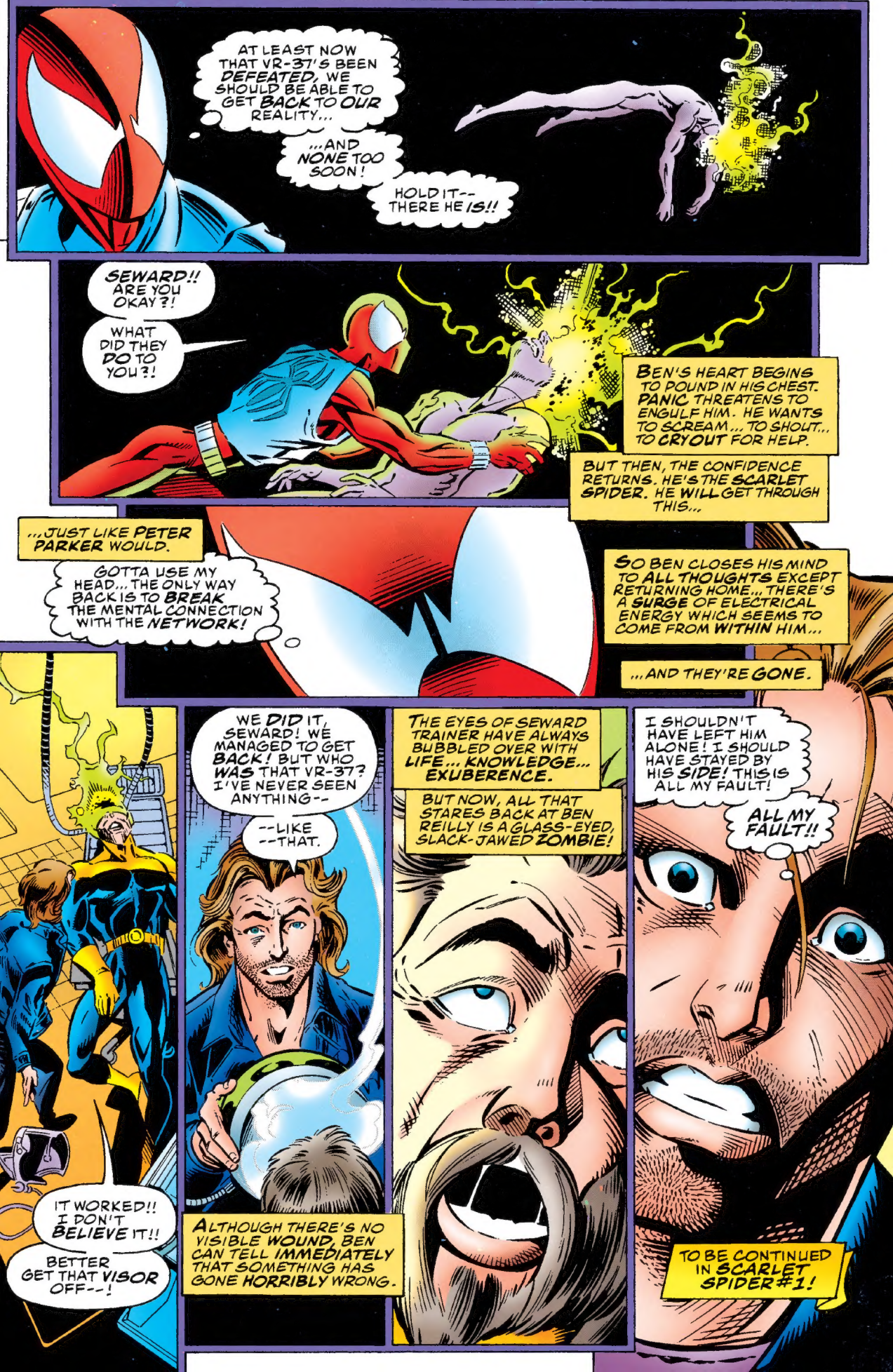
ALTHOUGH PART OF BEN IS PROUD THAT HE'S USED HIS SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM AT HAND, FEAR STILL CLUTCHES AT HIS HEART...
...FOR, IF HIS VIRTUAL REALITY OTHER SHOULD DIE IN THAT BIZARRE WORLD, WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO HIM?!
YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE COME!! YOU'VE ONLY MADE THINGS WORSE!!
USUALLY, I'M NOT SO PRONE TO AGREE SO QUICKLY...
...BUT IN THIS CASE, I'LL MAKE AN EXCEPTION!!
LET ME SHARE WITH YOU THE WONDERS OF MY DOMAIN, FLESHLINGS!
HERE, IN THIS WORLD OF TECHNO-SUB-CONSCIOUS, YOUR DEEPEST FEARS ARE MINE TO EXPLOIT... TO USE... TO TURN AGAINST YOU!
ANYTHING YOU CAN THINK OF, I CAN CREATE!!
"PERHAPS YOU RECOGNIZE A FEW OF MY CHOICE REINFORCEMENTS, SCARLET SPIDER?? SOME OF YOUR OLD PLAYMATES, TO BE SURE!
"MANIFESTATIONS OF VENOM-- CARNAGE--
"--DOCTOR OCTOPUS-- AND STUNNER!
"AND SINCE THEY'RE VIRTUAL, THEY'VE NONE OF THE WEAKNESSES OF THE ORIGINALS!!"

WELL, I DON'T RECOGNIZE THIS GAL, BUT I BET SHE'S NOT ABOUT TO GIVE ME A BIG HUG!
SEWARD-- DON'T BE A HERO! RUN!!
NOT A BAD IDEA-- BUT WHERE TO??
THERE'S NO WAY TO PULL THE MENTAL PLUG... TO GET BACK TO THE REAL WORLD... VR-37 IS HOLDING US HERE!!
ARE YOU SAYING NEITHER ONE OF US CAN LEAVE UNTIL WE BREAK HIS CONNECTION?!
SEWARD-- BEHIND YOU!!
AMAZING! HOW DO YOU KEEP FORMING THOSE WEAPONS?
IT'S NOT EASY.
EACH MANIFESTATION IS A STRAIN... GETTING PROGRESSIVELY WEAKER.
BUT THESE ARE NOT OUR TRUE OPPONENTS... ONLY WEAPONS EMPLOYED BY VR-37! YOU MUST TAKE THE FIGHT TO HIM!!
GREAT.
ONE OF MY FIRST CHANCES TO PROVE MYSELF AS A HERO, AND I HAVE TO ABANDON MY ONLY FRIEND TO THOSE MONSTERS!
SO! THE SPIDER HAS SPUNK!

FOOL!
DID I NOT TELL YOU THAT YOUR SUBCONSCIOUS WAS OPEN TO ME?
THAT IN HERE, YOUR SECRETS ARE MINE?!
THAT I CAN UNLEASH YOUR OWN WORST NIGHTMARES AGAINST YOU?!
MAYBE YOU ARE AS TOUGH AS YOU SAY... MAYBE YOU CAN TURN MY OWN PYSCHE AGAINST ME...!
BUT YOU'RE NOT REAL! YOU'RE JUST A FAKE!!
A DANGEROUS FAKE, BUT A FAKE NONETHELESS!
I MADE A PROMISE TO SEWARD TRAINER THAT I WOULD BE THERE FOR HIM--
--THAT I WOULD NEVER LET HIM DOWN!!
I'M A REAL HUMAN BEING--
--AND I'M NOT ABOUT TO BE INTIMIDATED BY SOME VIRTUAL REALITY FREAK!!


GOOD WORK, SCARLET! KEEP ON HIM!
OUR FOES ARE BEGINNING TO WAVER-- AS IF LOSING THEIR STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY!
SEWARD, I'M BEGINNING TO THINK THAT'S THE ONLY KIND OF INTEGRITY THESE GUYS HAVE!
WHY ELSE WOULD THIS JERK TAKE THE SHAPE OF THE ORIGINAL SPIDER-MAN, OTHER THAN TO RUB MY NOSE IN IT?
NO TIME FOR JOKES OR SNAPPY BANTER, REILLY-- THIS IS A REAL TOUGH SPOT YOU'RE IN, HERE...
...MAYBE THE TOUGHEST YOU'VE EVER FACED!
BUT PETER PARKER WOULD NEVER BACK DOWN...
...PETER PARKER WOULD KNOW WHAT TO DO...!
PETER PARKER WOULD KEEP FIGHTING... NEVER GIVE UP HOPE...
DESPITE THE ODDS...
...PETER PARKER WOULD WIN!!


HURRY, SCARLET!
ONLY BY DELIVERING A KILLING STROKE TO THIS UNLIVING ENTITY CAN THESE MANIFESTATIONS BE DESTROYED!
KILLING STROKE, YOU SAY?
WHAT A DELICIOUSLY CHAOTIC IDEA!!
THE THOUGHT FLASHES THROUGH SEWARD TRAINER'S MIND THAT THIS IS ALL A CONSTRUCT... A TECHNO-FANTASY MADE UP OF CIRCUITS, COMPUTER CHIPS, AND SOLDER.
THAT'S ALL TRUE, OF COURSE...
...BUT THAT MAKES IT NO LESS DEADLY!
YAARRGHH!
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO HIM, CREEP?!
I SWEAR IF YOU'VE HURT HIM--!!
THWAM!
BUT THE THREAT STICKS IN REILLY'S THROAT, HALF-UTTERED.
FOR, AS VR-37 FALLS FROM THE BARRAGE OF BLOWS, HIS BODY FADES INTO NOTHINGNESS...
...AS DOES THE CONSTRUCT REALITY HE'D CREATED.
I DID IT-- SOMEHOW, I'VE KNOCKED VR-37 OFF-LINE.
BUT NO TIME FOR GLOATING, REILLY-- I'VE GOT TO SEE TO TRAINER!


AT LEAST NOW THAT VR-37'S BEEN DEFEATED, WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET BACK TO OUR REALITY...
...AND NONE TOO SOON!
HOLD IT-- THERE HE IS!!
SEWARD!! ARE YOU OKAY?!
WHAT DID THEY DO TO YOU?!
BEN'S HEART BEGINS TO POUND IN HIS CHEST. PANIC THREATENS TO ENGULF HIM. HE WANTS TO SCREAM... TO SHOUT... TO CRY OUT FOR HELP.
BUT THEN, THE CONFIDENCE RETURNS. HE'S THE SCARLET SPIDER. HE WILL GET THROUGH THIS...
...JUST LIKE PETER PARKER WOULD.
GOTTA USE MY HEAD... THE ONLY WAY BACK IS TO BREAK THE MENTAL CONNECTION WITH THE NETWORK!
SO BEN CLOSES HIS MIND TO ALL THOUGHTS EXCEPT RETURNING HOME... THERE'S A SURGE OF ELECTRICAL ENERGY WHICH SEEMS TO COME FROM WITHIN HIM...
...AND THEY'RE GONE.
IT WORKED!! I DON'T BELIEVE IT!!
BETTER GET THAT VISOR OFF--!
WE DID IT, SEWARD! WE MANAGED TO GET BACK! BUT WHO WAS THAT VR-37? I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING--
--LIKE --THAT.
ALTHOUGH THERE'S NO VISIBLE WOUND, BEN CAN TELL IMMEDIATELY THAT SOMETHING HAS GONE HORRIBLY WRONG.
THE EYES OF SEWARD TRAINER HAVE ALWAYS BUBBLED OVER WITH LIFE... KNOWLEDGE... EXUBERENCE.
BUT NOW, ALL THAT STARES BACK AT BEN REILLY IS A GLASS-EYED, SLACK-JAWED ZOMBIE!
I SHOULDN'T HAVE LEFT HIM ALONE! I SHOULD HAVE STAYED BY HIS SIDE! THIS IS ALL MY FAULT!
ALL MY FAULT!!
TO BE CONTINUED IN SCARLET SPIDER #1!

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